

# **IGC Steward Report**

## **31<sup>st</sup>. FAI World Gliding Championships**

**Prievidza (Slovakia) 4th to 17th July 2010**

**Contest Director: Jozef Snirc**

### **1. ORGANISATION**

#### **1.1 Overall organisation**

Overall organisation was effective and friendly.

#### **1.2 Quantity of officials**

Sufficient.

#### **1.3 Experience of officials**

The CD and the Deputy CD had experience in running national Championships and the international Flight Challenge Cup (FCC), organised every year in Prievidza. The CD also served as steward at the WGC 2008 in Rieti.

#### **1.4 Suitability of meetings and briefings**

The briefings were held, not by the CD, but by a speaker who is very fluent in English and who presented the information very clearly. The briefings were short and to the point. Emphasis was put on safety.

At the first team captains' meeting, the Local procedures were presented and some clarifications were given.

At the beginning of the competition, team captain meetings were organised just before the main briefing but at our request, they were stopped because we found it unnecessary to give the same information twice and preferable to give the organisers more time to prepare the main briefing. Afterwards, short TC meetings were only organised when a specific problem had to be discussed with the Tcs.

#### **1.5 Suitability of weather information**

Weather information was provided by a professional meteorologist. The information given at the briefing and on paper distributed to the pilots was adequate and well presented.

#### **1.6 Suitability of facilities**

The organisers had put a great deal of effort into the infrastructure and the facilities were nearly perfect.

The briefings were held in a large and well equipped hangar. A good audio system was used to ensure that everyone could hear the information. Also, coffee and other drinks were available. Team captain meetings were held in an adjacent large lecture room.

The competition office, the scoring office, the office for the Jury members and for the steward, and an official notice board were located in a building next to the briefing hangar.

A large campground with adequate toilets and showers was available. A fence protected the campground from unwanted visitors. The competitors could also be accommodated in chalets built

for the championships. Chalets and containers for team meeting were also available.

Catering was well organised in the aero club restaurant and in a large tent, both located between the briefing hangar and the campground. Good quality food was available at reasonable prices.

A Wifi network covered most of the airfield and the Internet connection worked very well.

### **1.7 Transportation**

The Jury president and the Chief Steward shared a car. The hotel was located at walking distance from the airfield.

### **1.8 Information dissemination (Announcements, schedules and decisions)**

All the official information and results were displayed on the official notice board located in the briefing hangar. Printed information was distributed to the team captains and to the FAI officials in mail boxes. The results were also displayed on internet and on screens located in the bars.

SMS messages were regularly sent to the team captains in give them information about briefings, meetings, gridding etc...

### **1.9 Pilot assistance**

Pilots and crews could always find adequate and friendly assistance from the organisers at the competition office.

### **1.10 Retrieval**

There were no problems with retrievals.

### **1.11 Launch control for fair access and efficiency**

All launches were performed by 14 Dynamics manufactured by Aerospool, a company located on the airfield. Even though these micro-light aircraft are powered by engines delivering no more than 100 hp, the aero tows were efficient. The launching of the 106 gliders usually took about 1hour and 10 minutes

On several occasions pilots needed re-launches but the launching was fair.

### **1.12 Opening and closing ceremonies including presentation of Jury and Stewards**

The opening ceremony was held on the airfield. The ceremony was reasonably short considering the very hot weather. The FAI flag was flown during the ceremony and the FAI anthem played. It is to be noted that the former Secretary General Max Bishop was present.

The prizegiving ceremony was held at the briefing hangar. All FAI protocols were followed. Some traditions seemed to get lost since the FAI flag was still on the flagpole after the farewell party.

The Jury and the Stewards were presented during one of the briefings.

### **1.13 Other social events**

A very successful international evening was held. In addition to that, there was the usual closing party. The Organisers also invited the Jury and the stewards to a friendly dinner.

### **1.14 Total number of scheduled days and number of contest days**

The total number of scheduled day was 14. We had 11 competition days in the Standard and in the World Class and 12 days in the Club Class.

### **1.15 Media liaison and internet coverage**

Local newspapers covered the competition. Also, national papers had shorter stories. A TV crew

was at the airfield during the last two days. The information given after the fatal accident was well controlled.

The internet coverage was the responsibility of the "Pentagon", a team of young people who did an excellent job by taking care of the contest pages, video and photo gallery, tracking, and virtual contest.

More than 2000 pictures are available on their website.

A video team produced a short video every day with plenty of poetic or funny pictures illustrated by songs by Blackmore's Night. (These videos were also displayed at the beginning of every briefing and much appreciated by the competitors).

The statistics of their web site are impressive:

1 424 989 pages viewed

223 708 visitors

64 547 individual visitors

6,37 visitor/ pages

Visitors/country :Germany: 34 022, Slovakia: 24 632, Czechia: 12 235, Poland: 10119

### **1.16 Public and Internet display of real-time aircraft positions and information**

Internet display of tracking was done by using the DSX system, working with Condor and excellent scenery of the contest area. Every day, the 10 first pilots in one class plus 5 additional pilots in the same class were tracked. After some problems during the first days, the system worked reasonably well but it seems that only the GSM transmission worked reliably. Nevertheless, the mix of virtual views, real video footage (even if not from the same day), commentary by Art Grant and music was very much appreciated. On the best day, up to 2700 people watched the race. Even an outlanding was shown (with views from the cockpit!). Since these pictures are shown with a delay (30 minutes), some kind of control of the information broadcast will perhaps be needed in the future to avoid pictures of accidents or incidents being broadcast.

In parallel with the WGC, on-line virtual Championships were organised in every class by using the Condor SW program, the virtual pilots having to fly the same task as the "real" pilots. 138 virtual pilots from 33 countries participated. The winner in Standard class, out of 90 competitors, is Sergey Prochorov, with a Discus 2; in World class, Tomas Siejek's PW5, out of 13 competitors. All competitors received a diploma signed by the "real" pilot with the same ranking.

### **1.17 Other organisational comment**

Overall, the organisation was one of the best ever seen in a WGC.

## **2. RULES**

### **2.1 Adequacy of Local Procedures**

The local procedures were adequate and covered all eventualities.

At the first team captain briefing, some team captains complained about the minimum altitude required for crossing the finish line. The organisers explained that they feel this measure necessary because they want to avoid having pilots flying in ground effect when the finishes are made from the North, because there are high buildings and trees on this side of the airfield. Since some pilots again criticised this procedure at the first briefing, we definitively closed all discussions by publishing a clarification recalling that according to rule 7.7.2.b "a minimum altitude shall be imposed for crossing the ring". We set this altitude to 310m AMSL and, every day, the task sheet showed the QNH to be used to measure the altitude by the scoring ( See You allows setting the same QNH for all flights). This procedure worked well and we had no contestation during the rest

of the competition.

## **2.2 Addendums or changes**

No changes were made during the competition.

## **2.3 Fair applications of Rules and Local Procedures**

All rules were applied fairly.

## **2.4 Possible improvements of Rules and/or Local Procedures**

### **2.4.1 Annex A**

#### **Handicap list and reference weights in the club class**

Before the competition, we had a major problem with the handicap list for the club class. A few weeks before the championship, the official handicap list published on the IGC website was still outdated, with handicaps missing for some gliders, missing reference weights, and some wrong statements in the notes. The bureau decided to replace this list by the one established by Göran Ax, which is limited to the gliders really used in the Club Class in WGCs but some information about reference weights was still missing. We urge the Handicap Working Group to establish a complete and rock solid handicap list. During the scrutineering, we also noticed that the procedure for establishing the reference weights was somewhat strange and somewhat difficult to apply because data are missing or uncertain. We think that it would be much more simple and much more fair to set a maximum wing loading limit for this class ,as proposed 3 years ago by the German Delegate.

#### **Identification of igc files**

On contest days, all .igc files had to be uploaded on a website. This worked very effectively. However, during the official training, the scorers had a lot of trouble identifying the files because many files did not contain any information about the name of the pilot or the competition ID of the gliders. It took them several days to sort this out. We suggest making it mandatory in Annex A to identify the files.

#### **Protest time on the last day**

On the last day the protest time is 2 hours and this is fine. But it may happen that due to a complaint the result of the previous day are still not official on the last day and in such a case the protest time may expire very late. In order to avoid such an occurrence we suggest to set an absolute time limit for all protest times (for example 20:00 on the last day).

### **2.4.2 Local Procedures**

Nil

## **2.5 Task setting and operations**

The task setters did an excellent job during the competition, except on the penultimate day where he overestimated the soaring conditions so that 97 pilots landed out. At the next briefing he was punished with ten lashes from the executer of the Castle of Bojnice...

The operations were also extremely well managed. As already mentioned, the launches were also very effective.

Daily weighing ran fluently every day on three scales and one reserve scale. The scales were removable on the east part of RWY 22/04 in pre-prepared concrete square holes with iron plate covers. Weighing was carried out with an accuracy of 5 kg. The wind had no significant influence on the weighing. Unfortunately, it was not possible to re-weigh on the grid. Gliders which needed

a re-weigh were reweighed after landing.

The airfield was large enough for gridding 106 gliders. The PW5s were gridded in 3 rows (5 + 5 + 3) , the Club Class in 9 rows (5 x5 + 2) and the Standard Class in 9 rows (5x5 + 1).

## **2.6 Scoring system (use and application)**

The scoring was done by 4 experienced scorers using See You. A little mistake in the configuration of See You was discovered during the training period and was corrected. The scores were accurate and published with only little delay. The results were published to Soaring Spot and to the official web pages.

## **2.7 Protest handling and registration**

Several complaints and two protests were filed.

The first protest was filed by the Argentinian Team Captain because one of his pilots had got a warning after a near miss with another pilot (see below). This protest was somewhat unusual since it was filed directly without first filing a complaint to the Organisers. The Jury decided against the protester.

The second protest was filed by the Swedish Captain against the decision of the Organisers not to disqualify several pilots, who, according to him, had flown dangerously when entering a thermal in which two of his pilots were circling. The protester obviously wanted to demonstrate that the Swedish pilot involved in the mid-air collision on the first day (See below) was not the only pilot misjudging his entry in a thermal. The Jury found no evidence of dangerous flying and decided against the protester.

On the penultimate day, the organisers received a complaint from the American Team Captain requesting disqualification of two French pilots (FH and EZ) for alleged unsporting behaviour, wilful interference with one of his pilots (TS) and hazardous flying. The complaint was rejected because the investigation of the traces did not show any evidence of such behaviour. The CD stated that requesting disqualification in such a case is totally disproportionate. The normal procedure would have been to first submit this issue to the safety committee. The US TC accepted the answer..

The two latter cases indicate that some TC's tried to take advantage from the decision made by the Organisers to disqualify the pilot considered as responsible for the mid-air on the first day.

## **3. SAFETY**

### **3.1 General safety of the event**

The safety record of the competition was one of the worst in a WGC since we had three accidents, one of them fatal. Additionally, we had a near miss and we received several reports about aggressive and reckless flying. All these accidents or incidents occurred during the first week.

These accidents and incidents cannot be considered as the fault of the Organisers. The launches were safe and the finishes were also safely managed. At every briefing, emphasis was put on safety, safety notes on outlanding (presented in Rieti by Dick Bradley) and safety flashes made in St Auban were shown.

The safety committee was formed according to the rules. The following members formed the committee:

- Jaroslav Vach – steward
- Luca Urbani ITA – World class
- Gerard G. Dale UK – Club class

- Mario Kiessling GER – Standard class

The safety committee received reports about gliders:

- flying hazardously before the start.
- not observing the right hand rule.
- not keeping to the same, main circle.
- crossing the circle of other gliders.
- flying in clouds

The Committee investigated the cases and spoke to the pilots involved.

### **3.2 Occurrence of incidents and/or accidents**

#### **Mid-air collision**

Right on the first competition day (4 July), we had a collision between two gliders 8K (Ronnie Lindell) and GX (Tomas Suchanek). The collision happened at an altitude of 2200m, approximately 10 km South West of Ruzomberok town. Only GX had a proximity warning device. Both gliders were damaged. 8K had his tail and bottom damaged but flew back to the Prievidza airport. GX was more severely damaged, losing part of the right wing and had his canopy broken but was able to land on the Ruzomberok airfield. Luckily the pilots were not injured.

The organisers heard both pilots and analysed the iGC flight records of their gliders. They came to the conclusion that GX was circling to the right in a thermal when 8K was entering the same thermal. For unknown reasons, the two pilots didn't see each other. 8K entered the thermal in a normal way considering other gliders he saw in the same thermal but he didn't see GX. When he started to turn right, he suddenly saw GX coming from behind and below. He pulled up but could not avoid the collision.

According to the organisers, although unintentionally, the pilot of 8K created an extremely dangerous situation by cutting the circle flown by GX. Considering that it is the full responsibility of the pilot entering a thermal to make sure that s/he does not interfere with a glider already circling in this thermal, the director of the competition decided to disqualify the pilot of 8K for the day and to exclude him temporarily from the competition for the next two flying days. The decision was accepted by the Swedish Team Captain.

The pilot of GX had to replace his glider which could not be repaired for this competition.

At the next briefing, the competition director announced his decision and showed the traces. He also urged all pilots to look out all the time and fly safely.

#### **Near Miss**

On July 8, shortly after the opening of the start line for the Club Class, a near miss occurred between the Austrian glider ISV and a Argentinean glider, G1.

The pilot of ISV reported a collision to his team captain and landed immediately. His glider was inspected and no damage of any kind was found. The pilot could have relaunched but decided not to take off again because he was shocked by what he believed to have been a collision.

The pilot of G1 felt that the two gliders were very close but did not touch each other. He therefore decided to continue to fly the task. The Competition Director nevertheless asked him, via his Team Captain, to land immediately as required in rule 4.1.4 of Annex A. The pilot was allowed to be relaunched because, like ISV, his glider was undamaged.

According to the pilot of G1, he was flying in level to the south when he saw a glider approaching very close under his left wing, below and behind. He made an immediate right turn to fly away from him. He stated, that the other pilot did not see him because he was looking towards a thermal in

front of him and to the left.

According to the pilot of ISV, he was joining a gaggle from the right side turning slightly to the left. Suddenly looking upwards, he saw the underside of a fuselage of a glider coming from behind very close to his canopy. The other glider turned left.

Only ISV had a Flarm.

The analysis of the tracks of both gliders on their flight recorders showed that both gliders were flying nearly parallel before converging slowly. ISV was slightly behind G1 and was flying a little faster but it is difficult to assess if he really did not give way to G1 coming from his right. Since both pilots left the previous thermal together, and were close all the time, they should both have monitored the other glider better. ISV should have looked from time to time at 90° to the right to see G1, whereas G1 should have looked at 90° to the right to see ISV.

The Competition Director therefore decided to give a warning to both pilots for not having maintained sufficient look-out. The Argentinian Captain filed a Protest against this decision.

### **Fatal accident**

The same day, the Russian Standard Class pilot, Alexander Martynov, crashed in his LAK 19 sailplane about one hour after the opening of the start line, close to Horna Stubna, approximately 23 km North East of Prievidza.

At least two other pilots witnessed the accident. According to them, Alexander was circling in a thermal at nearly 1000 meters AMSL when he entered into a spin. He did not recover from this spin and crashed into a forest. Pilots sent the coordinates and one of them landed in Martin in order to help identify the crash location.

The Organisers were immediately alerted by the team captain of one of these pilots. They immediately activated the search and rescue system. They also sent an aircraft to the accident location to search for the sailplane and after a few minutes, it was joined by a helicopter from the Search and Rescue system. Due to the density of the forest, none of the aircraft could find the glider. Finally, the police informed us that they had found the wreckage and that the pilot was dead. The crash site is at an elevation of 800m.

The Organisers decided to cancel the task in the Standard Class and informed the team captains about their decision. In order to honour the memory of the Russian pilot, they also decided that the day after (9 July) would not be a competition day.

In accordance with the FAI Casualty Procedures, a press statement was made and the FAI was informed within a few hours of the accident

It seems that the pilot had little experience on the type of glider and also little experience in mountain flying. The Accident and Incident Investigation Department of the Ministry of Transportation and Communication of the Slovak Republic is currently investigating the accident.

Since the pilot had no personal life insurance, the organisers invited donations, which were given to the widow when she came to Prievidza.

### **Accident during an outlanding**

The day after the fatal accident ( July 9<sup>th</sup>), we had another accident. During an outlanding, the Hungarian pilot, Andras Gyongyosi, (Discus 2BR competition ID: DX) was landing out on a field when he saw a fence in front of him. He tried to avoid the obstacle by pulling up. He managed to fly over the fence but made a hard landing. The landing was so hard that he was injured and the rescue (rocket) parachute was activated. He was transported to a local hospital where spinal injury was diagnosed, following which, he was repatriated to Hungary for surgery. The pilot was supposed to be the Competition Director in Szeged...

### **3.3 Availability of medical personnel**

A doctor was present all the time on the airfield.

### **3.4 Use of safety officers**

An airline pilot, former member of the Slovak CAA, was appointed as safety officer. He monitored all operations from the control tower and solved all possible problems in English. He was also the interface with the Slovak CAA during the accident investigations.

### **3.5 Launch safety**

As already mentioned the launches were safe.

### **3.6 Pilot skills relating to safety**

We do not really understand why we had so many accidents and incidents during the first week. It seems that the level of the pilots was quite non-homogeneous and that several pilots were not accustomed to flying in a competition with so many other pilots. Also, some pilots seemed to be "over motivated" and flew too aggressively. After the series of accident, we felt it necessary to make a powerful speech to remind everybody that no medal, no placing in a world championship is worth putting his own life or the life of other pilots at stake.

### **3.7 Suggestions for future safety enhancements**

We believe that the IGC needs to set up clear guidelines for the organisers and the stewards on how to handle a mid-air collision like the one we had. In such a case, do we have to determine the responsibilities and to penalise pilots having not given way or flown too aggressively or do we simply consider that the event was simply due to bad luck and continue as if nothing had happened? We believe that adopting the latter attitude would give a wrong message and show that we do not really have the willingness to improve safety at competitions.

Another issue is the fact that not all pilots used a FLARM. We should perhaps find a way to make such devices mandatory in international championships, despite them not being allowed in all countries...

Finally, we should also consider decreasing the number of entries in a class. Simple statistical considerations show that the probability of having a mid-air collision increases very rapidly with the number of pilots in a class (it is more than proportional to this number). We know that it would not be a very popular decision but if the IGC restricted the number of pilots to one pilot per country and class we would certainly limit the risk of mid-air collisions...

Roland Stuck

Jaroslav Vach

Chief Steward

Steward